

Baby Blues

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Author's note: This is not only my story, but Robin's as well. However, it's easier to post it under one authors name.

Amanda closed the door after she watched Joe and the boys drive off. A single tear rolled slowly down her cheek, she tried to hide it from Lee, but he was watching her carefully from the sofa. He got up and quietly walked over to her and put his arms around her.

"Hey, it's not so bad, you still have me." He said as he kissed her ever so gently on her lips. He grinned that boyish grin that she loved so much.

She gave him a quick fake smile as she walked into the living room sitting down on the sofa. "It's just that it's the first time they haven't been home for a holiday. It's just going to be hard, that's all."

"Joe did invite you, why don't you go?" He suggested, seeing how much this was bothering her.

She shook her head. "No, this is the first time Carrie will have the whole family. She doesn't need me in there too. She'll be nervous

enough with Joe's parents and the boys. Besides, I've got you." Her frown turned into a smile as she stroked his face tenderly.

He leaned in and kissed her passionately. "And I have plans for you this weekend. Why don't we get out of here before you get all gloomy again? I've got a really nice bottle of champagne that I've been saving for a special occasion."

She whispered to him. "And what is the special occasion?"

"My first thanksgiving with my wife. Just you and me alone." He beamed, rolling her down on the couch, his motives were very clear and she was very willingâ€|

The next morning at Lee's apartment.

"Why are you getting up so early?" He asked her as she got out of bed.

"For one thing it's not early, it's nearly ten, secondly I need some aspirin, I don't remember the last time I drank so much champagne. And lastly, despite what you may believe, the turkey will not stuff itself, I need to get started on it." She answered.

"Why don't we just go out for dinner, then you wouldn't have to go through all that fuss?" He reminded her, wanting to spend time with her.

"And miss all those yummy leftovers? No way! Besides, cooking a turkey is really no big deal." She shook her head. "I'm adjusting as it is to not having my boys here, I've never gone out for dinner on Thanksgiving or Christmas, let's not change every tradition." She answered quietly sitting down on the edge of the bed near him.

"Never?" He stroked her back gently. She shook her head. "You still miss the boys and your mother?"

"I'm OK. I'm glad the boys are spending time with Joe, it's important for them at their age, and mother doesn't get to see her sister very often, so it works out pretty well for everyone."

"Except you." Lee added as he tenderly stroked her arm.

"No, including me." She turned and kissed him. "I don't get to spend enough time with you either. It's time that we start making our own traditions, we're family now."

He grabbed her and rolled her back onto the bed and smothered her with kisses. "Like getting drunk on a good bottle of champagne and making love all Thanksgiving Day! I think I like new traditions."

"I need to get started on the turkey." She reminded him.

"The turkey can wait. I think I really like this new tradition, how about dinner at four?"

"Four eh?" She responded to his kisses and giggled. "The rate we're going it's going to be six."

Several weeks later

Amanda and Lee were just finishing a quiet dinner at his apartment when the phone rang, Lee looked over at Amanda, she shrugged her shoulders. He got up and answered the phone. "Stetson."

"Hi Lee, it looks like the trip is on after all." Billy responded.

"So when?" Lee replied.

"You need to be out there before the weekend."

"Got it."

"Lee are you sure you want to take this assignment?" Billy asked.

"Yeah, it's not a problem." Lee answered and he quietly hung up the phone.

Amanda looked at him with a quizzical look. "I don't like the sound of that. What's not a problem?"

"A quick little side trip, nothing for you to worry about." Lee answered vaguely.

"A quick side trip where, when and why is this the first I've heard about it?"

He got up from the sofa, picked up his plate and started walking towards the kitchen. "Billy mentioned it to me last week, he didn't know if he was going to need me or not, apparently he does. He was hoping it would work itself out."

Amanda followed him into the kitchen. "So where are we going?"

"We aren't going anywhere. I am."

She felt a lump develop in her throat. "Come on Lee, what's going on."

He took a deep breath, he wasn't looking forward to this conversation, but it was inevitable now. "Amanda, I'm flying to Vegas before the week's end. There have been some problems out there and they need some help. Billy was hoping that it would clear up, but it hasn't."

"So how come you haven't mentioned it to me before?"

"Because it would have upset you if you knew I was going to be gone for Christmas."

"Christmas? That's ten days from now. That sounds like an awful big problem. Lee, why didn't you tell Billy you, we had plans forâ€|"

"Amanda, I'm being sent because I'm single, well, at least they think I am. Most of the agents are married with familiesâ€|"

She turned away and walked out of the room, tears were streaming down her face. She sat down on the sofa in disgust. "Damn it Lee. Why is it The Agency always steam rolls its way into our plans."

"I'm sorry, I should have told you sooner, I just didn't want to hurt you." He said with sorrow in his eyes.

"Hold me." She cried.

He wrapped her in his strong arms and held her tightly to him. He gritted his teeth, thinking to himself, Why am I doing this to her?

"When are you going to be back?"

"I don't know for sure, we might get lucky and I could be back by Christmas."

She looked at him with a get serious look. Nothing they ever did was that easy.

"Most likely after Christmas but hopefully before New Years Eve." He said dejectedly.

She threw her head back into the air. "I can't believe this is happening."

It was the first week of the New Year. Lee had been in Vegas for the entire holiday. Amanda was miserable without him at home and at work. It was late morning, she was in the vault in the Q bureau when the door opened, she didn't even hear it. He snuck up behind her and whisked her into his arms.

"God I missed you." He gushed.

"Lee!" She cried with delight. "I didn't think you would ever come home."

"I didn't think so either. God what a trip, and to think I use to like Vegas." He said after he kissed her.

She was hugging him tightly, "When did you get back?"

"Early this morning. I didn't even set my alarm, I'm still on Vegas time. Billy doesn't even know I'm back yet. I just wanted to hold you." He answered looking into her dark eyes.

She smiled brightly at him, returning his kisses. "I'm so glad you're back, how did things go in Vegas?"

"Not great, we know who we're after now at least, we just can't find him." Lee said disgusted.

"Well at least you're home."

"Did you like your Christmas present?" He asked softly with a sparkle in his eye, "You did get it didn't you?"

"The boys and mother loved their gifts."

"Well, that's good, but what about you?" He asked intently.

"I haven't opened it yet." She replied warmly. "I wanted to be with you when I opened it."

"Amanda, you didn't have to." He looked at her with pangs of guilt.

"I know but I wanted to wait. How about tonight? I'll tell mother I have to work late." She smiled a conspiratorial smile.

Lee smiled deeply. "I really like that idea. Let me tell Billy that I'm back. I'll see you soon."

Lee walked down to Billy's office. He had missed her terribly, he wished he had stayed home to be with her for the holidays. Even considering their situation, being home would have been better than three weeks in a hotel without her. Billy saw Lee as he walked into the bullpen and motioned for him to come into his office. He was just hanging up the phone.

"I heard you were back, nice of you to stop on by." Billy said cynically.

"Hey cut me some slack, I've been gone three weeks, and the plane landed at two AM, I'm not sure what time zone I'm in at the moment." Lee grimaced, jet lag still reeking havoc on his body clock.

"Well, don't get too comfortable, Randolph just surfaced in Miami. I'll have Francine book you on the afternoon flight."

"Miami? This afternoon? No way Billy." Lee answered shaking his head. "Amanda will kill me, I just got back."

Billy looked over at Lee with an odd look. "What does Amanda have to do with this?"

Lee realized what he said, but covered quickly, "She is supposed to be my partner Billy. You've separated us for three weeks, she's been locked up in the Q bureauâ€|"

"Now wait one minute Scarecrow!" Billy interrupted him. "You volunteered for that Vegas trip. Besides Amanda is doing just fine up in the Q bureau, she doesn't need you to hold her hand. She actually has that vault organized for the first time since I can remember."

"Billy come on. Why can't the Miami office handle this? I'm exhausted, I'd like to sleep in my own bed for more than a few hours."

"Sorry Lee. You started this assignment, you're going to see it through. Now I suggest you go pack a bag so you don't miss that flight, with any luck you'll be back in a few days."

Lee got up, realizing the conversation was over. He knew Amanda would be angry, furious would be a better word. God he regretted volunteering for the Vegas assignment now. How could he have been so stupid to do it? Why couldn't he have just stayed in town? He knew

how much it meant to Amanda. She hadn't even opened her Christmas present.

Amanda was on the phone when Lee got back into the Q bureau. His frown turned into a broad smile as he looked at her. She smiled back at him as she hung up the phone.

"Well we're all set for the night. I told mother I'm going out of town for the evening and won't be back until tomorrow."

Lee just looked at her. Her smile seemed to radiate more than he remembered. With his tongue in cheek, he regretfully explained. "Amanda, there's been a change in plans. I'm heading for Miami, Randolph just surfaced down there. Francine's making the arrangements now. We'll have to put off 'Christmas' for a few more days."

"A few more days! Why don't we just wait and celebrate our anniversary then? No wait, you'll probably be sent out of the country for that." She ranted slamming her desk drawers.

Lee waited until she was done she had a right to be angry. "Are you through yet?" he asked.

"No! Why do you have to go? I seem to recall there being a sizable staff at the Miami agency, can't they handle it?"

"I tried that angle with Billy too. But it's my case and I've got to see it through, I know this guy better than anyone else. Besides if he leaves the country, I'll be following him where ever he goes. I'd rather that not happen. I would like to spend some time with you before our anniversary."

She got that gloomy look on her face, like the one she had before Thanksgiving. Her eyes were melancholy, her lips were almost pouting, her soul seemed to be pierced by his leaving her again.

"I'm really sorry. I'll be back before you know it."

"Yeah." She replied half heartedly.

"Amanda, you're not being fair."

"There just so much to tell you. You've been gone for three weeks! You just don't understand. I miss you, I need to talk to you."

"When I get back, I'll take a couple of days off, we'll hide in my apartment, or sneak away for a weekend to the mountains or something."

"Promise?"

He walked over to her, leaning on her desk, "Promise." They shared a lingering kiss before he pulled away, trying to avoid a tearful goodbye.

Lee ended up being in Miami for over a week. He got back to the office late on Monday afternoon and he headed straight for the Q bureau, but Amanda wasn't there when he arrived. He sat quietly at his desk mindlessly going through the mail she had carefully placed

on his desk. He was exhausted, he hadn't slept for a couple of days. He put his head down on his desk and quickly drifted off to sleep.

Amanda came in a while later and saw him with his head down on his desk. "Lee, are you all right." She worried, coming over and feeling his forehead.

Lee lifted his head up slowly, "Yeah, just tired." As he reached up to her and pulled her down onto his lap. He embraced her tightly, nuzzling his head into her.

"So are you home for a while, or just changing planes?" Amanda asked sarcastically.

"No, I'm home for good. We picked up Randolph this morning at six AM before he got on a plane headed for the Bahamas. I got on a plane as soon as I could and headed here."

He continued his attention to her, kissing her gently on her neck and shoulders. "How about dinner tonight and maybe we can finally celebrate Christmas together."

Amanda was shaking her head and grimacing, "Sorry, Philip has a basketball game tonight. You're welcome to join us, but from the looks of you now, you'd be better off calling it an early night."

"You sure you wouldn't mind?"

"Yes I mind, but what's one more night, we haven't spent more than five minutes in the same room in over a month. But tomorrow night, you better not try to weasel out of!" She smiled.

"Not for anything in the world." He kissed her back.

Lee went home early and got a good nights sleep in his own bed. He slept late, and when he finally wandered into the office it was afternoon.

"You're starting to look like your old self again." Amanda noticed as he walked into the office.

He went over and gave her a quick kiss. "I'm starting to feel like my old self again. I was really beginning to miss this place, but not as much as I missed you."

"Well you can show me tonight how much you missed me. I told mother I was going out of town on assignment." She smiled at him in anticipation.

Lee was grinning. "So where would you like to go tonight?"

"Let's just spend the night at your place, I can cook us up a nice home cooked meal. Nothing fancy, just the two of us together and we can talkâ€|" Amanda had dreamed about what she wanted to tell him and how thrilled she knew he was going to be.

"Talking wasn't on the top of my list of things to do tonight." He grinned mischievously, his eyes twinkling.

She chuckled, "You're so bad." She slapped at him playfully.

"Now don't tell me you're not thinking the same thing." Lee chastised.

"Obviously not in the same order at least."

"Well, let me check in with Billy, see how things are going in Miami. I'll see you later."

"Hey keep Thursday afternoon open will you. I might be needing you, then."

He grabbed her hand and kissed it tenderly and winked at her, "Anything for you. I'll see you later."

Down in Billy's office, Billy was congratulating Lee. "You did a great job in Miami. Looks like we've got that smuggling ring tied up in a big knot."

"Yeah let's hope so, I'd like to stay put for a while."

Billy's face contorted, "Wouldn't you like to take one more quick trip?"

Lee looked at him and started shaking his head. "No thanks, I'll pass."

"Well, I hate to tell you but, you're going to have to. But I promise just two days this time. You just volunteered for the terrorism summit in Baltimore."

"Why is it all of a sudden that nobody else is available for this? I had plans for this evening. I've hardly had a night off in a month! Let Johnson go, or Francine. For god sakes Billy I just got back into town."

"Johnson is out, he's got the measles, Francine has been working a case and will be on surveillance tonight. You're the only one who doesn't have an active case who has experience with these terrorists. Someone from this office has to go, you'll be back Thursday night. You can brief us at the staff meeting Friday morning and then take off for a few days."

"A few days, yeah like Saturday and Sunday right. I've already put in forty hours this week. You owe me a week."

"Fine. Take next week off. But I need you to be there." Billy reluctantly agreed.

Lee went back to his office and Amanda looked up at him smiling. "Hi sailor, how about dinner tonight?"

"How about dinner Thursday night?"

"No, I'd really prefer tonight." She said starting to get angry. How long was this going to keep happening? "What now?"

"You know Stu Johnson has the measles?" Amanda nodded. "Well, since

he's out, I'm taking his place at the domestic terrorism conference in Baltimore."

Amanda gritted her teeth, "Let me guess, it starts tonight and ends on Thursday."

"That's the winning guess."

"This is unbelievable. Is this some great conspiracy to keep us apart or what?" Amanda moaned.

"I'm starting to wonder. For what it's worth, Billy is sympathetic. He's agreed to give me a weeks comp time next week." Lee smiled, he definitely had some ideas on how to spend that time.

"Well that's great for you, what am I supposed to do?" Her aggravation at the situation continued to grow.

"You have plenty of comp time too, we'll take some time off and go play in the mountains, we can go to Pine Top. Who knows? Maybe we can even get in some skiing this time." He smiled devilishly.

"I was saving that time for," she paused, "well for something special."

"Well, I think we can make next week pretty special. An early anniversary present." He suggested, Amanda just looked at him. "I hate to say this, but I need to go home, I've got to get to the dry cleaners before I go and do some wash. I've been living out of suitcases so long, I don't think I have anything left clean to wear. I'll call you tomorrow night, and hopefully I can catch up with you on Thursday night."

She sighed, "So much for being out of town, my mother is going to think I'm crazy. This is the second time in just over a week that my 'trip' has been canceled."

"Your mother already thinks we're crazy. This will just confirm things. I'm sorry about this, but I will make it up to you this weekend. Can you get Joe take the boys for a few days?"

"I'll work on that, and I'll talk to you tomorrow night." Amanda kissed him and watched as he walked out the door.

Amanda waited at Lee's apartment, she had prepared a home cooked meal to surprise him. She so desperately wanted to see him, to talk to him. It was after ten when Lee finally got home.

"What happened to you? Where have you been all night? I thought the conference ended at five." An anxious Amanda asked.

"It did, but I got a flat tire on I-95 and had to change it, then waited at the tire store for over an hour for them to fix it. I haven't eaten yet, I ruined this shirt, tore a hole through my pants." Lee had a disgusted tone in his voice.

"OK, OK I get the picture. I just wished you had called, I've been worried sick about you."

"Amanda, please don't start with me tonight, I'm not in the mood."

Lee snapped at her.

"Well, excuse me for worrying about you. I thought a wife had the right to worry about her husband." Amanda snapped back.

"For the record, I did try calling your house, twice. But the line was busy. I didn't know you were here."

Amanda nodded. "Phillip's new girlfriend. I'm sorry I snapped at you. It's been a tough couple of weeks."

"I know. I'm sorry too. I'm exhausted." Lee looked exhausted.

"Are you hungry? I could reheat your dinner." Amanda suggested.

"I'm starved. You wouldn't mind?" His face brightened.

"No. Of course not." She got up and gave him a welcome home kiss. "I'm just glad you're really home. Why don't you get out of those dirty clothes and put on something more comfortable?"

Lee smiled, he was starting to relax. He returned her kiss with one a long one of his own. "I'll be back in a moment, don't forget where we were."

She laughed as she headed into the kitchen to reheat his dinner. When he came back, he was in a pair of jeans and a pull over sweater. "Anything I can help you with? How about a nice bottle of wine?"

"None for me thanks. Why don't you just sit down at the table and relax? Dinner will be served in a moment." She smiled at him.

He sat down at the table that was carefully set for two and picked up an envelope. "What's this?"

Amanda looked at him uncomfortably. She had forgotten that she left the pictures on the table. She didn't want him looking at those right now. "Oh some pictures, let me put them away, you can look at them later."

He noticed her reaction, and grinned delightfully. "Oh, did we have some glamour shots taken?"

Amanda blushed, coming into the dining room trying to get the envelope away from him before he opened it. "No. Let me have that."

"Something Jamie took? At Christmas?" He teased holding them out of her reach.

She had to laugh at that suggestion. "No. Lee please, give those to me." Her attitude was changing from laughter to concern. She struggled to get them away from him, but the more she tried, the more determined he was to look at them. "Lee, not now. Save them for later." She pleaded.

He turned away from her and opened the envelope and looked at the two black and white photos with a puzzled look.

"I hope this isn't a new camera you got for Christmas, because these pictures are awful. What the heck are they supposed to be of anyway? All I can make out are two blobs!"

"Well you got the number right anyway." Amanda replied resigned to the fact that she had no choice to tell him now.

Lee looked at her still not understanding. "I guess the joke's on me, because I don't have a clue. What are these pictures supposed to be of?"

"Sorry, I thought you might have figured it out. Most people would call those two blobs 'twins'." Amanda clarified and just watched the expression on his face.

It took a moment for it to sink in, then his face lost all its color. "You're pregnant?"

She smiled precociously and nodded at him. "I've been trying to tell you since you got back from Vegas."

"Twins?" He said as he slunk down into his chair, overwhelmed by the thought. Then slowly he looked up at her and stood up. "Come here." He said in a loving tone. Amanda came over to him with a smile. He kissed her on the lips tenderly. She let out a deep sigh, she was not sure how excited he would be about the baby. This was certainly a relief.

"I guess I deserve this, you really had me going for a second. A baby! You really do take practical joking to a new height. I get it! It's [ayback for being gone so long and not taking you with me, right? I'm sorry about volunteering for the Vegas trip. I never expected it to turn into a month long ordeal. Can you forgive me?" He asked looking into her eyes.

She was confused, she pushed away from him gently, now standing about arms length from him. "Lee, I'm not sure what you're talking about, but this isn't a practical joke. I'm really pregnant."

He looked at her again, studying her face, she was serious. He looked at the pictures again, squinting his eyes at them. "I think I need a drink."

"Lee!" She shrieked.

"I think I'll make that a double." He mumbled as he headed into the kitchen, ignoring her protest.

"Lee, you're scaring me."

He gulped down a drink and poured himself a second one. "A baby! Twins no less. How long have you known?"

She sighed. "Since New Years Eve."

"Nice of you to mention it to me. That was almost a month ago!" He yelled.

"Well if you would be home for more than five minutes at a time maybe

I would have!" She yelled back. "Would you like to elaborate on the Vegas trip?"

"Oh no you don't. You can't change the subject like that. How could you let this happen? Weren't you using anything?" Lee flung the accusations harshly.

"Of course I was! You know that." Amanda was shocked at the question.

"We can't have a baby. For one thing nobody knows we're married. Do you have any idea how complicated this could get?" He replied as he poured himself another drink and gulped it down quickly.

Amanda looked at him in shock. Was he asking her to end the pregnancy? She realized how complicated it was going to be. She'd worried about that herself for the last few weeks. But she was carrying two lives inside her, these were his unborn children. How could he be so cold about them?

"I realize things will be complicated." She tried desperately to hold back the tears forming in her eyes. "But these are our children. What would you like me to do? I think the best thing for us to do is simply tell the truth about everything."

"Tell the truth? Just like that. After we've been keeping things a secret for nearly a year? Dammit, Amanda, how could you let this happen?.."

There was nothing for her to say. She grabbed her coat and purse and hurried out the door.

"Amanda!" He yelled as he watched her go. His own head was beginning to pound from the lack of food. He didn't know what to say to her. He was in shock. He was just stunned. Standing in the kitchen doorway he finished his drink, looked at the glass and threw it against the wall, shattering into pieces.

Lee walked into the Q Bureau and sat at his desk. He didn't know what to do. He'd hoped Amanda would come back to his apartment last night, but she hadn't. How could this have happened? He really screwed things up. Amanda came in and sat at her desk quietly not looking at him. He looked at her, expecting her to say something, anything. She only picked up and file and started writing. He looked at the stack of paperwork on his own desk. He picked up a pen and started working on it. Amanda looked up. He could feel her gaze on him. She was looking at him with a worried expression on her face. He couldn't look at her. He threw the pen down, stood and started pacing. He ran his fingers through his hair in frustration.

Amanda couldn't stand it any longer. "Lee, please say something."

"What do you want me to say? For months, I've been telling you I'm tired of keeping our secret and you've been telling me that the time wasn't right to tell everyone about our relationship and now you're telling me that we have no other choice!"

"It just seemed like the most logical decision to me. What would you suggest we do? We can't just continue on the way we are under the

circumstances. It's hard enough on just the two of us barely getting to see each other and we're adults. I don't want to put our children through that."

"I know all that, Amanda. It's just that this news kind of threw me for a loop. When you said we needed to talk, I had no idea you were going to tell me that you're pregnant."

"Well, I didn't exactly get pregnant by myself, you know." She looked away from him. She couldn't let him see how much he was hurting her. She thought he'd be happy about the babies. She thought he'd be happy that they'd have a reason not to hide their marriage anymore.

"Don't you think I know that?" Lee snapped. "I was there, remember? I just don't know what to do. We can't just blurt out the truth."

Amanda looked at him in disbelief. "So are you suggesting that we go on living separate lives, pretending that we're not in love? You know that mother and the boys will know immediately that you're these babies' father. It won't take The Agency long to figure it out either, considering they know that I haven't been dating anyone since I told Francine that you and I broke up. I suppose you just want all of them to think that you're not interested in being a father to these children."

Lee looked at her. "Are you implying that I don't want to take responsibility for my children?"

"That's certainly what it sounds like." She stood and walked toward him. "I just can't believe I trusted you after everything I heard about you, but I did. I was stupid enough to fall in love with you and believe that you loved me too. I'm the biggest fool in the world to think that someone like you could ever change. And I believed every word you said too. 'You've changed my life, Amanda. I'll always be here for you, Amanda. Let's make love all day, Amanda. Who needs turkey when I've got you, Amanda.'" Her voice grew louder with each sentence she threw in his face. "But when I really need you, you're not there for me, but that's ok. I raised Phillip and Jamie alone, I can do that again if I have to. Should be easier the second time round." She turned and walked to the window staring at the street below. She hung her head, trying desperately not to let the tears in her eyes fall.

Lee was hurt and angered by her last comment. He couldn't believe she was twisting his words around this way. "Don't you dare equate this to what Joe did to you! I have no intention of running out on my family!" He threw himself onto the couch and leaned his head back with his eyes closed. "Oh, hell, Amanda, I don't know what we should do." Amanda turned and looked at him. His anger was subsiding. She sat beside him on the couch. He sat up and looked at her. "The only thing I know for sure is that I love you, and believe it or not, I love these babies too." He said as he lightly stroked her stomach. "This just isn't how I envisioned us having a child. I wanted us to be settled somewhere with all the secrecy behind us. This is no kind of life for a child. I know that from personal experience."

"You mean, you've thought about us having a child together?"

"Not much. Only every single day since you and I started seeing each other seriously. Every time I play ball with the boys or go to the park with them, I wonder about it. I wondered what they were like when they were little. I wonder how you looked when you were carrying them and what you'd look like carrying our child. I've wondered if we'd ever have a chance to have the normal life I missed out on as a kid. I never thought I'd even come close to having a normal life until I met you."

Amanda slipped her hand in his to comfort him. "We can still have something of a normal life."

"How? The Agency won't let us be normal and you know it."

"Billy and Jeannie managed it and their kids grew up happy and healthy. Ours will be too." She hugged him.

"There's a big difference though. Billy is administration. He's not an active field agent and Jeannie stays at home. She's not involved with the spy business at all."

Amanda pulled back from him. Was he suggesting what she thought he was suggesting? "Are you saying I should quit my job?"

"Maybe you should. It might be better for all concerned."

She stood up angrily. "It would certainly be better for you, wouldn't it? Then you wouldn't have to explain anything to anybody. Heaven forbid anyone here should know that you're involved with a lowly housewife."

"Amanda, that's not what I meant!"

"I know what you meant. Let me tell you I have no intention of quitting my job. I've worked too hard to get where I am, but don't worry. Me and my children will be just fine without you."

"Your children? They're my children too!"

"Yes, but I can see that you're not ready to be a father." She said as she flew out the door.

"Amanda, wait!" He followed after her as she flew down the stairs into the foyer and headed for the elevator.

Back in the Q Bureau, the vault door slowly opened. Francine poked her head through the door cautiously, wanting to make sure they were gone. She hadn't meant to eavesdrop, but she didn't want to interrupt them either. Her head was spinning with all she'd just heard as she walked out of the Q Bureau and headed down the hall.

Lee got to the elevator just in time to see the doors shut with his wife inside. "Damn!" He growled.

Mrs. Marsten looked at him with a curious expression on her face. "Is something wrong?" She asked. "I just need to take a walk to clear my head before the meeting." He said as he walked outside. He didn't even know where he was walking to. He knew he needed to be away from there for a while. He walked aimlessly thinking about the situation. How could this be happening? He knew he'd hurt Amanda terribly, but

he didn't know how to fix the hurt. She'd hurt him too, though by saying he wasn't ready to be a father, but maybe she was right, maybe he wasn't. He didn't know. This was all so sudden. He loved Phillip and Jamie, but he always knew in the back of his mind that they weren't really his. At the end of the night he still went home to his own apartment, alone. They were his family and yet they weren't at the same time. He knew he was messing things up with them. How could he possibly handle the responsibility of his own children?

Then his thoughts turned even darker, what would happen if he and Amanda ended up in a situation like his parents' had? Who would take care of their children then? Dotty was a terrific grandmother, but she wouldn't be around forever. He didn't want his children to grow up the way he had, always searching for love from someone and never finding it. The Colonel had done his best, but he was a bachelor who had no idea how to raise a child. Lee looked around, not realizing how far he had gone, he stopped and sat down on the curb, trying not to think anymore.

Amanda sat alone in the conference room, finally letting her unshed tears fall. She couldn't believe that Lee actually told her she should quit her job. Was he so ashamed of their relationship that he couldn't stand to have the truth be known? Why didn't he want to be a father, he had developed a wonderful relationship with Phillip and Jamie, she thought he'd be thrilled with the news - at least after the initial shock wore off. She knew how important family was to him and that he'd always longed for the family environment he'd never had when he was a child. It was a shock to her to find out how little she actually knew about her husband. Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of the door opening. She hastily wiped her tears away as Francine entered the room.

"Amanda?" Francine whispered softly.

"Yes?" She said, trying to sound like her normal cheery self.

Francine saw right through her act. "Amanda, you don't have to pretend with me. I heard your argument with Lee."

"What!?"

"I didn't mean to, Amanda. I was in the vault looking some things up for the mornings' staff meeting. You and Lee caught me off guard."

"So..you know?" Amanda asked hesitantly, still trying to go over in her head what she and Lee had said to each other in their anger, exactly what did she hear.

"That you're pregnant with Lee's child? Yes."

"Children, actually. Twins. The doctor told me yesterday. I was so tickled, I thought this would be the perfect coming home present for Lee."

"Apparently he didn't think so."

"I know." She said sadly. "I don't understand it either. He was always telling me how much he longed for a family and now he doesn't

want the one he's got." She bit her lip, trying not to cry again. "Go ahead and say it, Francine."

"Say what?"

"I told you so. You warned me that Lee wasn't a family man and I didn't listen to you, I should have. You've known him a lot longer than I have. You were right."

"I wouldn't do that to you, Amanda. Not when you need a friend."

"You're not my friend, Francine. Why aren't you making some snide remark, cracking jokes and trying to hurt me the way you usually do?"

"It seems to me you've had enough hurt for one day. What are you going to do?"

"What do you mean? I've been a single mother for the past 6 years. I'll just keep on doing what I've been doing I guess. It won't be that difficult. Even before I was divorced I felt like a single mother because my husband was gone all the time." *A lot like Lee is now.* she thought.

"If there's anything at all I can do, let me know."

Amanda looked at Francine, still uneasy of her sympathetic gesture, "Thanks, Francine. That means a lot, really." "So, how do you think your boys will take the news?"

"I don't know. They've just started to get used to having Lee around. I don't know how they'll handle having to deal with two infants. This situation..." Billy walked in. Both women were suddenly silent. He looked at them strangely.

"It looked like you two are anxious for this meeting to start." He said trying to figure out what they could have been talking about.

"Of course we are, Sir." Amanda stated. "This case being wrapped up is important to all of us. And we're both anxious to hear more about the domestic terrorism summit in Baltimore!"

As if on cue, Lee walked in. He sat in his usual seat next to Amanda. She couldn't look at him. He reached under the table for her hand, wanting to reassure her that things would be ok. She pulled her hand away abruptly got up and walked over to the other side of the table and sat next to Francine.

This scene did not go unnoticed by Billy. He thought it was definitely strange, first Amanda and Francine having a private pow-wow and now Amanda avoiding Lee. Something wasn't right. He began to feel guilty, maybe he shouldn't have separated them for so long. He was about to ask what was going on when other agents started filing into the room. He'd ask them after the meeting.

The meeting droned on. Lee got up and gave his briefing on the summit in Baltimore. It was not his usual concise briefing, but rather confusing and rambling. His focus was not on domestic terrorism, but

on his impending domestic problems. Billy knew something was up, but he wasn't sure what the problem was. Amanda sat at the table, not quite focusing on anything, just trying to keep her mind from wandering to her 'situation'. As the meeting came to a close, Billy noticed Francine and Amanda whispering and nodding.

"OK people, that should wrap it up today. We've had a good week. Let's not drop the ball." Billy said as the agents got up. Amanda hurried out of the conference room, followed closely by Francine. Lee started after them, but Billy called to him. "Lee could you hold up a minute, I'd like to talk to you?"

Lee's face dropped. He really wanted to go after Amanda. "Sure Billy. What's up?"

Billy waited until the conference room was cleared then closed the door. "I was about to ask you the same thing. Do you mind telling me what's going on here?" Billy asked patiently.

"I'm sorry, Billy. I got in late last night. I really haven't had enough time to prepare for this briefing!" Lee started to explain.

"That's not what I meant. What's going on between you and Amanda? You two have a fight?" Billy asked point blank.

Lee swallowed hard, not sure how to address that question. How could he tell Billy that not only did he secretly marry Amanda almost a year ago but now she's pregnant? He still wasn't sure how he felt about his impending fatherhood and how it was going to affect not only his personal life but how it was going to affect their partnership, at least in the upcoming months. He didn't want to lose the best partner he'd ever had, but how would the agency deal with them being married and having a family?

"Um, I'm not sure what's going through her mind at the moment." That much was the truth. He didn't know why Amanda was so sensitive right now. He'd only meant to suggest that she take some time off until the twins were born, but the whole thing got blown out of proportion. He knew she was angry with him for not being around for the holidays though. "I've been gone more than I've been around lately. I was just going to head up to the Q bureau to talk to her." Lee explained, looking over at Billy who seemed satisfied, at least for now.

Lee quickly raced up to the Q bureau, he opened the door and looked over at Amanda's desk to find Francine sitting there waiting for him. Lee rolled his eyes, this was all he needed now.

"Where's Amanda?" He asked trying not to seem overly concerned.

"I didn't think you still cared." Francine snapped. He may have fooled Amanda into believing that he was going to be around, but Francine knew how the real world was. And she knew Lee.

"Francine, I don't have time to play games. Do you know where she is or not?" Lee gritted his teeth, trying unsuccessfully to hide his aggravation.

"She left! Unfortunately, not soon enough!" Francine added scathingly.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Lee yelled.

"Lee haven't you hurt her enough? She's in love with you and carrying your children. Now you decide that it's time to cut your losses and run! You're not going to get off this easily this time. You can't just run away from her now that she's going to be the mother of your children. You've just signed on for an eighteen year commitment, like it or not." Francine railed at him.

Lee was stunned and flustered. Amanda had confided in Francine of all people. He looked at Francine with wide eyes, mouth open. For a few seconds he didn't know what to say. He finally uttered with little confidence, "It's not what you think this is."

"Like hell it's not. She trusted you and you let her down."

"I didn't let her down, Francine. You don't know what's going on, so I think it's better that you keep your opinions to yourself."

"Sure, you didn't let her down at all. That's why she was in the conference room crying after your fight."

"She told you about our fight?" He couldn't understand this. She and Francine had never been the best of friends. She couldn't believe she would tell her all these things.

"She didn't have to tell me, Lee. I was in the vault and I heard every word."

"Oh brother."

"I just can't believe you. She was counting on you. You know she never would have given herself to you if she didn't believe that you loved her."

"Given herself to me? You talk about her as if she were a blushing virgin and trust me she's not. She has two children. How do you think she got them?"

"That isn't the point. The point is she's not the type of woman to go to bed with a man without feeling that he loved her."

"This may come as a shock to you, but I really do love Amanda."

"Spare me, Lee. You may have Amanda convinced, but I don't buy it."

"Why? Because I never said that about you?"

"This isn't about me or anyone else that you've been with. Amanda is different than all the other cheap one-nighters you've had."

"Don't you think I know that?" He couldn't take this. Why did it have to be this way? What would it take to convince her that he really loved Amanda and wasn't planning on running out on her?

"You know I warned Amanda that you weren't the marrying type. This is

the one time I really hate being right. Damn you." Francine got up walking past him in disgust.

Lee stepped in front of the door, blocking Francine from leaving the Q bureau. "Do you know where she went?" He asked in desperation. He had to find her. He had to let her know that he loved her and that they could work it out.

"No, and to be honest with you, even if I did, I don't know if I'd tell you." With that she pushed him aside and left him standing in the Q bureau. He sat down at her desk and picked up a picture of her and the boys. He suddenly felt very alone.

Amanda walked into her house and tried not to think about her problems. She knew the boys would be home from school soon and she didn't want them to see her upset. It was hard to avoid thinking about it though. Lee's selfish behavior was going to affect their whole future. She'd never imagined that he would be like this. She always saw more in him than anyone else did. She trusted him completely in spite of all the talk about him. Now she realized her mistake. She walked into the house, still fuming from Lee telling her to quit her job.

"I gave up one career for a man, I won't do it again." She muttered.

"What, Dear?" Dotty asked, thinking she was talking to her.

"Nothing, Mother."

"No, really what?" Dotty interest was piqued now.

"I really don't want to talk about it, Mother."

"You and Lee had a fight, didn't you?"

"Fight? What makes you say that?"

"Mm-hmm. I knew it. What happened?"

Amanda was silent for a moment, pondering just how much she should tell her mother. She took a deep breath and began. "Lee thinks I should quit my job and we had a fight about it. I gave up my first career choice because of Joe so he could have his career. I shouldn't have to do that again."

"Now, I never thought Lee would be the type of man who would expect you to quit your job. Why would he even suggest such a thing?"

Amanda bit her lip. She wasn't ready to tell her mother the whole story yet.

"It's a long story."

"I've got all day." Dotty said impatiently. She was tired of her daughter not being straight with her. She was worried about her.

"Mother, I appreciate your concern, but I just need some time to work this out on my own."

"Ok. I understand. I always thought Lee was supportive of your career. I never thought he would be like that."

"Neither did I," Amanda admitted sadly. "I thought he was different than Joe, but when it comes right down to it, they've both put their careers ahead of my needs."

Dotty was thoroughly confused now. How was he putting his career ahead of her needs? Was their employer having a problem with their personal relationship? She shook her head. "Well, at least it's different this time Amanda. I mean you and Lee didn't get married and have two children before you found this out."

Amanda only looked at her mother and suppressed a laugh. *If only you knew.* she thought.

"Anyway, I'm sure that Lee doesn't really want you to quit your job. From what he tells me, you two work quite well together at IFF."

"He told you that?" Amanda replied with astonishment.

"Yes, several times. Lee and I talk a lot when you're not here. He's so charming, I can't help but enjoy all his tall tales."

Amanda smiled. Lee knew how to tell some whoppers that was for sure. She just couldn't figure out what was going on in his head now. Why was he being so selfish? She let out a deep sigh and threw herself onto the couch.

Later, that evening, she was sitting at the dining room table playing a half-hearted game of monopoly with Phillip and Jamie. She was lost in her own thoughts and worries.

"Mom!" Jamie said loudly, snapping her out of it.

"What, Sweetheart?" She asked.

"It's your turn."

"Oh." She said. She picked up the dice and shook them. She moved her token around the board mechanically not even noticing where she landed.

"Woo-Hoo!" Phillip yelled. "Boardwalk with a hotel. That's 2000 smackers!"

Amanda groaned as she picked through her money. "Couldn't I just give you an IOU?"

"Not a chance. Fork it over!" Amanda reluctantly handed him four \$500 bills and sighed as she looked at the two remaining dollars she had left. She sighed as she thought of how that emptiness compared to the emptiness she felt in her heart.

"Are you Ok, Mom?" Jamie asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine." she lied. How could she tell her children that she'd let a man into their lives who didn't care to be a father? She let them learn to care about him and now she prayed that they weren't going to be hurt. The doorbell rang jarring Amanda from her silent prayer.

"I'll get it." Dotty called from the living room.

"Isn't it your turn, Jamie?" Amanda asked, trying to take the focus off herself.

"Uh...yeah..." He said, no longer in the mood for a game. He knew somehow that something was wrong with his mom, but she wouldn't admit it. It bothered him when she was like this. He felt helpless but didn't know what he could do to help her.

Dotty walked into the room just then with Francine following close behind her.

"Amanda, you've got a visitor." Dotty said.

Amanda looked up and gave a sudden start when she saw who was standing there with her mother. "Francine, what are you doing here?"

"Is that anyway to greet a friend? I'm the one who helped you out today remember?"

Amanda shook her head, warning Francine not to say anything. Francine rolled her eyes. *Amanda must think I'm stupid. I know better than to say anything in front of her family.*

"Helped you out with what, Amanda?" Dotty wanted to know. She wondered if it had anything to do with Amanda's fight with Lee.

"Oh,...Um...." Amanda hesitated. "Francine helped me out with a big problem I was having at work today."

"That problem wouldn't happen to go by the name of Lee Stetson now, would it?"

Amanda glared at her mother, then turned to her sons. "Fellas, since I've lost yet again why don't you two put the game away and take it back up to your room?"

"So, that's why you're down in the dumps, Mom." Jamie said. "And that's why Lee didn't come over tonight to play with us like he was supposed to. You and Lee had a fight."

Francine raised a curious eyebrow. "Does he come over here a lot to play games with you guys?" she inquired.

Amanda looked at Francine with annoyance then back to her children. "Look, guys. I know you like Lee being around and all, but we have disagreements just like you two. I want you to know that it has nothing whatsoever to do with you. He's free to come over and spend time with you if he wants to, Ok?"

"Ok" both boys said.

"Now, go on and put your game away. Francine, could I see you in private, please?"

"Sure." Amanda led her into the living room and shut both sets of doors so they wouldn't be heard.

"Seriously, Francine. What are you here for? Did you come to gloat and tell me you were right all along?"

"No. I came to see how you were and how Lee was after I talked to him."

"I'm fine. As for Lee, I wouldn't know. We haven't spoken since I left the office."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Are you, Francine?" Amanda asked suspiciously.

"Yes, I really am."

"I thought you'd be overjoyed at my relationship with Lee is falling apart."

"No. I never had any desire for you to be hurt. I know we haven't always been the best of friends and we probably never will be, but I do want to help you get through this. I think if I were in trouble you'd try to help me too."

Amanda nodded. "Yes, I would." she said. Amanda sat down, weary to the bone. It had been a trying day. Francine sat beside her.

"After all the hurtful things he said to you, you're still in love with him, aren't you?"

"That's a pretty silly, question, Francine. Of course I am. You don't stop loving someone just because you have a disagreement."

"This a pretty major issue to disagree on though, don't you think?"

"Yeah, but I know he's scared. I'm scared too."

"Don't you dare defend him! He needs to grow up and learn to accept responsibility."

"I'm not defending him, Francine. It's just that...well...I know some things about him...about his past that you don't. I know what emotions he's having trouble dealing with..."

"It doesn't matter what happened to him in the past. That doesn't give him the right to treat you like this. You have to stand up for yourself. This is your future you're talking about. And the future of your children."

"I know, but at the moment, I just don't know what the best thing to do is."

"To be quite honest, I don't either. I've never been in your

situation, but I'll tell you something, I won't let him get away with this and that's a promise.

The two women sat together in uncomfortable silence when Dotty came into the living room. "Can I get you something to drink?"

"Thank you, but no, I really have to get going. I was just in the neighborhood and thought I'd drop in. Maybe next time." Francine smiled as she got up from the couch.

Just then the doorbell rang again. Dotty turned to answer it quipping, "Seems like we're a regular grand central station tonight."

Amanda and Francine looked at each other uneasily. Seconds later they both could hear his voice, it was Lee. Francine glanced over at Amanda. But there was little she could do at the moment. Dotty ushered him into the living room.

"Look who I found." Dotty entered the room smiling suspiciously at Amanda who looked very uncomfortable. Francine was just glaring at him with burning eyes.

Lee just looked at the three women like he walked into a pit of vipers. Not quite sure what was going on, and who knew what. Suddenly his idea of waiting for Amanda to calm down didn't seem like such a good idea after all. He thought to himself, *At least the boys aren't down here.* But almost as if on cue he heard Phillip and Jamie race into the room and broke the silence.

"Hey Lee!" Phillip shouted with gusto. "Kind of late tonight. We didn't think you were coming."

Glad for the momentary distraction, Lee turned and greeted the boys. "Hey guys. Something came up today, I'm sorry I didn't get here sooner. I guess I owe you two a rain check."

"Maybe tomorrow night. Mom's been down in the dumps all night. It really wasn't much fun."

Phillip elbowed his brother. "You've got such a big mouth, Dufus. Don't you know when to keep your trap shut, you're such a baby."

Amanda cut in before the usual brotherly ruckus started. "Boys enough. Don't you two have some homework you need to finish?" She suggested.

"Your mom's right. Get it done tonight and then it will be done for the weekend. We can have another game tomorrow night." Lee agreed, knowing he had missed the promised game of monopoly.

The boys headed out of the room and up the stairs to get their homework started.

"I guess I should be going. Mrs. West, it was nice to see you again." Francine looked over at Amanda with compassion and gave Lee a menacing glare. "Lee."

Amanda looked over at her mother with a silent glance, hoping she

would leave the room. As tired as she was, she needed to talk with her husband and preferably alone. Dotty got the hint and excused herself. Once the door closed behind her, Amanda lashed out at Lee.

"Don't make promises to the boys that you don't intend to keep."

"What makes you think I don't intend to keep my promise to the boys. When have I ever broken a promise to them? Or to you for that matter?"

"Oh, I don't know. Somewhere I seem to recall you promising to stand by me for better or for worse, but I guess that's not really a promise you intended to keep, is it? Maybe you feel the same way about the rest of our marriage vows too."

"Amanda, don't."

"Lee, it's late. I think you should leave now. I'm tired. I haven't been sleeping well lately with everything that's been going on."

"If not tonight then when?" he asked urgently. "Tomorrow morning? My place? 9 AM?"

"Is that an order?" She snarled wearily at him.

"No it's not an order. It's simply a request from a husband to his wife." He stated implicitly.

"I'm not making you any promises."

"Ok if that's the way you want it." He walked out the door. Amanda sat down and sobbed.

Amanda slept fitfully most of the night if she slept at all. It was dawn when she finally sank into a deep sleep after suffering a bout of morning sickness. A knock suddenly awakened her from her sound slumber, a voice hesitantly calling out to her.

"Mom, are you all right?" Jamie whispered tentatively.

"Hmmm? What? What is it, Sweetheart?" Amanda asked as she sat up slowly in her bed, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes.

"We were kind of worried about you. You never sleep this late."

"Late? What time is it?" She looked at the alarm clock beside her bed to see it was 8:50AM. "Oh my gosh, I'm late!"

"Relax mom, it's Saturday. We were just worried that you might be sick."

"I've got an appointment this morning, Jamie." Amanda said as she quickly got up giving Jamie a quick kiss good morning. "Scoot, tell your grandmother I'm fine. I've got to get dressed and out of here."

Amanda hurried through her bedroom, grabbing clothes out of her closet, and heading for the bathroom but deciding she didn't have the time for a shower. She quickly dressed and gathered her things and headed downstairs trying to get out of the house before she saw her mother. But it wasn't meant to be.

"Amanda, where are you going? You haven't even had breakfast?"

She looked at her mother, "I really don't have the time this morning. I'm already late as it is. I'll be back later."

"Amanda what kind of example are you setting for the boys starting your day without breakfast?" But the lecture was falling on deaf ears as she just shook her head, reached for her car keys and headed out the door.

As she got off the elevator at Lee's apartment she heard a crashing noise. She opened the door with her key and saw Lee sitting at his kitchen table with a half empty bottle of brandy.

"Kind of early to be drinking, don't you think?" She asked, looking at her watch, it wasn't quite ten.

"I didn't think you were coming." He snapped back, hurt in his eyes.

"I overslept." she explained.

"You could have called."

"How about I start you some coffee?" She asked hoping to change the momentum of their conversation. They were heading for another fight the rate they were going.

"Pot's already made, I was waiting for you, then I changed my mind." He said looking longingly at the bottle of brandy. At the moment it was the escape he needed.

"How about we both have some - coffee." She suggested hopefully. He only shrugged.

"Give me one good reason." He said tilting the brandy bottle in front of him.

"I can think of at least two." She said looking down and placing her hands on her abdomen for emphasis.

"TouchÃ©". He answered, pushing the brandy bottle away.

She rummaged through his familiar cupboards trying to find two coffee cups. They needed to settle things once and for all. She couldn't go on day after day trading barbs with him about their future and their childrens' future. It wasn't healthy, and their fighting was taking its toll. Unable to find any coffee mugs she opened the dishwasher and not finding any in there she finally asked.

"Lee where are you hiding your coffee cups. I can't find any."

Lee pointed to the corner of the room, where a pile of cups laid in various states of disrepair, broken and shattered on the floor. She

took a few steps into the living room and gazed at the sight. There must have been a dozen cups and glasses sitting there. She stumbled towards the sofa, reaching out for it to steady her weakened knees. Suddenly her emotions felt as shattered as the coffee mugs in the corner. Tears filled her eyes and there was little she could do to stop them. She was emotionally and physically drained.

Lee got up from the table and walked into the kitchen. Rummaging through his cabinets he found an old coffee mug with a chipped handle that she'd overlooked and filled it with coffee. He silently headed into the living room and sat down next to her on the sofa, putting the coffee down on the table carefully so as not to spill any.

"I really want to hold you right now, but I'm afraid if you pulled away I couldn't bear it." Lee said honestly wanting to close the distance that separated them.

Amanda slowly turned towards him and leaned into him. The body language was all the reassurance he needed as he wrapped his arms around her tightly and whispered to her. "Please tell me we can work this out. I love you and want to be with you."

He held her for a while until her crying subsided. She wiped her eyes, trying not to look at him in her current state, she must have looked a sight. She pulled away slowly.

"How about we start this morning over again?" He suggested. "Let me get some coffee in me and you can go freshen up."

"Would you mind if I took a shower? I was in such a hurry this morning to get here, I didn't have a chance."

Lee kissed her on the forehead. "Yeah, take your time, maybe I can rustle up another coffee cup and ah, clean up that mess."

She came out of the bedroom showered and feeling refreshed. Lee had cleaned up the mess and had managed to find another coffee cup. He picked it up and headed towards her smiling. She looked much better than she had just a little earlier. He himself was on his second cup of coffee and was feeling a little more human himself.

They both started to talk at the same time and laughed, feeling a bit shy and awkward with each other.

"You go first."

"No, you go first."

They laughed again. He reached out for her hand and carefully led her to the sofa.

"Amanda I'm sorry. For everything, the things I've said to you and even more, the things I didn't say. I love you unconditionally. I've been a jerk the last few months thinking if I wasn't around for the holidays it wouldn't hurt so much when I woke up without you. But I was wrong. It made me more miserable and I've been taking it out on you - the one person in the world I never want to hurt again. I want you with me for the rest of my life and I want to be there with you when my children are born and when they say their first words and take their first steps. When they start their first day of school and

learn to ride a bike. I want to be there when they learn how to drive and have their first dates, but the first thing to do is to bring them into this world safe and sound. "

Amanda smile faded, "Lee, I'm glad to see you feel that way, but I don't want to quit my job, I know this pregnancy is going to change things and I'll have to slow down, but I won't quit. I love my job and I've worked too hard to get where I'm at," she said firmly.

He was shaking his head, "I said I was sorry and I meant it. I said a lot of things the last few days I didn't mean. I don't want you to quit, but you need to take a less..." he paused not quite sure how to say what he was feeling. "...A less active role in the field for a while. For my own peace of mind." He reached out and gently stroked her face. "I don't want anything to happen to you or those babies." His moved his hand downward and gently stroked her abdomen. It amazed him to think about the two tiny lives nestled inside his wife's body. "You and our family mean the world to me."

She smiled, the sincerity in his voice spoke volumes. This was no longer the scared man she spoke with the other night. "I won't let anything happen to our children." She finally whispered. "But we have a lot to work out still."

"I know. But we can work it out. I really don't care how we work it out, just that we do."

"I think one of the first things we need to do is tell everyone the truth."

Lee nodded in agreement. "You're right. I just hope we're both up to it." He said.

Lee and Amanda started off at Billy's office. Since their personal problems had begun affecting work, they felt he had the right to know what was going on.

Billy looked at them. He was curious to know what had been happening with his top agent team.

"Sir.." Amanda began, not quite sure how to approach the subject. "We have something to tell you."

"I'm listening." He said. He couldn't wait to hear this one.

"Well,...Sir...We...that is, I... I'm..."she hesitated.

Lee couldn't stand it any longer. "We got married a year ago and now Amanda's pregnant." He blurted out without thinking.

Billy was stunned for a moment. "Well, that certainly explains a lot."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, just the way you've been selective with your assignments over the last year, Lee. But why did you volunteer for Vegas at Christmas?"

Lee looked over at Amanda, he still felt terrible about that. "Well, since nobody knew we were married, it was kind of hard to pretend we weren't, so I kind of 'bugged out'. But from now on I'd prefer to stay put, considering the um, the circumstances. I want to be with Amanda throughout her pregnancy and I want to be there when my children are born."

"Children?"

"Yes. We're having twins!" Amanda gushed. She was so happy now that they'd gotten things worked out for the most part; they only had to tell her family.

"Well, I can certainly understand your need to stay in the area, then, Lee. I'm sure that won't be a problem. As for you, Amanda, it may be best for you to take on some lighter assignments."

"I agree Sir, but I want you to know that after the twins are born, I fully intend to be back to my normal work load."

"Believe me, with this world as crazy as it is, I won't have a problem with you working as a full-time agent again. Especially if it means someone will be keeping our Scarecrow out of trouble."

Lee glared at him. "Very funny."

"My only question is, why the big secret? I can understand why you would have kept it from Amanda's family, but why not tell me? Lee, I'm supposed to be your best friend."

"I'm sorry, Billy. It's just that we weren't sure how things would go over with The Agency. We wanted to be together, but we don't want to be separated. We still want to work together as a team. We work well together and you know that Amanda is the only person I've ever completely trusted."

"I understand." He said, smiling at them. He was glad they were happy.

"Billy, about that week off you promised me, you think you could spare my wife for the week too?"

Billy laughed, "I guess I could. Consider it a belated wedding present."

"Thanks Billy." Lee grinned and winked as they walked out of the room together.

Francine shook her head again. She could hardly believe her eyes. She watched as Lee and Amanda out of Billy's office and into the bullpen hand in hand, smiling. Everyone was still as they watched the two of them. Francine walked over to them.

"So, I take this means you worked things out." She said, not quite sure what was going on.

"Yes, we did." Lee said, smiling at his wife as he proudly displayed the gold band on his hand.

Francine looked at it in surprise. "When did this happen?" she

demanded.

"Almost a year ago, " Amanda replied, smiling back at Lee.

"Wait a minute! You mean to tell me that all this time the two of you have been married all this time and never said a word to anyone?"

"That's right, Francine."

"I don't believe it!"

"Believe it, Francine," Lee said. "Amanda is my wife."

Francine raised a wary eyebrow. "You're serious? This wouldn't just be some scheme to cover up the fact that you got your partner pregnant, now would it?"

"Not at all. I married Amanda because I wanted to. We're getting ready to celebrate our first anniversary and in a few months we'll have even more to celebrate." He said, beaming.

"Well, this is certainly a change of heart from last night. " she said suspiciously.

"Not at all, Francine. I was just a little surprised at first. This was the last thing I expected when I came home. It's actually a relief now because it means that we can stop sneaking around and just be ourselves. We don't have to hide anymore."

"Good thing, too. " Amanda said. "Because in a couple of months it will be quite apparent to everyone here just what we've been doing with our spare time." She grinned at her husband.

Lee picked up from there. "Well, Francine. We'd love to stay and talk, but we really have to catch up on some 'things'. Catch ya later." They hurried toward the elevator arm in arm as Francine watched them with a puzzled expression on her face.

The doorbell rang and Dotty looked over at Amanda, wondering what this evening would bring. Jamie bolted from the table and eagerly answered the door. Moments later he returned to the dining room with Lee who was carrying a bottle of sparkling cider. Lee walked over to where Amanda was sitting and kissed her on the cheek. Dotty was just soaking all of this in, pleased to see that they apparently had settled their disagreement.

"I'm in the mood for a little celebration." Lee winked at Amanda.

"Sounds like a great idea," Amanda agreed. "Pull up a chair and I'll get some glasses."

"Just what is it that we're celebrating?" Dotty inquired, lifting her eyebrow.

Amanda brought the glasses to the table and gave Lee a corkscrew. Lee quickly popped the cork and started to pour everyone a glass. When he was done he handed Amanda a glass and wrapped his other arm around her. He turned and kissed her again on her cheek.

"Mother, Lee and I have a confession to make to you all. We've been hiding something from you for almost a year now, and I think it's time that you know the truth." She paused, looking at Lee and then continued, "Lee and I were married last February."

"You what?" Was chimed in unison by both boys and Dotty.

"We eloped!" She said, smiling.

"A year ago." Dotty glared at Amanda. "I've been asking you for months about when you two were going to tie the knot and you were already married!" She exclaimed.

"Dotty, we kept it a secret for some very important reasons. For one thing the boys barely knew me a year ago, and we wanted them to have a little more time to get to know me. But more importantly, our jobs are not what you think they are. IFF isn't really a film company but a front for a secret government agency that deals with very sensitive issues. For safety reasons, we thought it best if the family didn't know about it." Lee quietly explained. "We should have told you the truth a long time ago, but we didn't because we were concerned for your safety. There are some pretty shady characters out there and we didn't want any of them trying to come after you."

Jamie and Phillips eyes were fixed on Lee's every word. They were intrigue by what he just told them, but at the same time not quite sure exactly what he meant. Dotty sat there dumbfounded, almost waiting for the punch line, but it never came. Finally she spoke.

"Are you trying to tell me what I think you're trying to tell me?" she asked incredulouly.

"Yes, Mother, that's exactly what we're telling you. We've been working together for over five years now. At first I was only used as a civilian just part time, but now it's full time, and I've lost my civilian status and became, ah...regular full time." Amanda hedged, still not believing that they were finally telling the family.

"You're a spy?!" Jamie said with his voice cracking.

Amanda winced hearing that word coming from her youngest son. She never thought the day would come that they would know the entire truth about her job.

"She's a very good one too." Lee boasted looking at the bewildered stares on their faces. He regretted telling her that she should quit her job. She was the best partner he'd ever had. "I propose a toast." He said as he turned to Amanda. "To the most beautiful woman in the world, my partner, my wife, Amanda Stetson." "Here here," Dotty said cheerfully as she raised her glass. She was a little hurt that they'd kept secrets from her, but at the same time, she saw the happiness that Lee had brought to the lives of her daughter and her grandchildren so she couldn't help but be happy for them.

There were several more toasts and Lee poured the last of the cider into everyone's glasses. Amanda then called for one last toast. As she started she was already blushing, looking around at her family

gathered at the table, it somehow felt almost surreal. "To Lee, my best friend and partner. To the man who knows me better than anyone, and still loves me despite it all." Her voice grew softer as she tried to finish, now looking directly at Lee, not sure she wanted to see her family's faces as she spilled the final news. "To the father of the twins I'm carrying, I love you now and forever."

Lee grinned brightly clinking glasses with his wife, at the moment they didn't even notice anyone else, they shared a lingering kiss, no longer interested in the cider in their glasses. It was a few seconds later before they broke their kiss. Dotty was clearing her throat trying to get their attention.

Amanda finally turned to her stunned family. Dotty was beaming but the boys seemed less than thrilled by the last of the announcements. She put down her glass and walked over to her two sons. "I know this is all a shock to you. It's going to take some time to get use to the idea. When Lee found out I was pregnant, it took him a few days to get use to it too."

"Your mom's right. It was a really big shock to me when I found out I was going to be a father. I mean you two guys are like sons to me, but we can go and play ball with and do things, but with a baby - Well, I'm still not quite sure I'm ready for it."

Dotty spoke up excitedly, "Lee I have a feeling you're going to be a natural. Oh, Amanda, maybe you'll finally have a little girl!" "A girl?" Jamie complained making a face. "Mom, I'd rather you have a boy."

"It's not as if they get a choice at the hospital, Wormbrain." Phillip elbowed his brother.

"Trust me Lee." Dotty said laughing at her two grandsons as she slipped an arm around each of them. "Even a set of twins will be much easier than these two characters!"

"I hope you're right, Dotty." He said nervously still not sure. Then looking at the last bit of cider in his glass he suggested, "Bottoms up!" Lee drained his glass. "Now where exactly is that Monopoly board? Or are you two afraid of losing to me?"

"Losing to you? Never!" Jamie said defiantly. "I'm the monopoly king!"

Phillip gulped down his cider and sprang up from his chair, "I'll get the game!"

"Hey, I'm the banker tonight!" Jamie called after him as he raced up the stairs after his brother.

"No, you're not. I am!" His brother called back.

Amanda came back over to Lee's side, as they listened to the boys continuing to bicker. "See what you get to look forward to? Are you sure you're still up to it?"

He reached around her waist and kissed her again. "With you by my side, I think I might make it through this."

"I'll drink to that." Amanda said as she finished her cider. She knew that it wouldn't be an easy adjustment, but if they all stuck together, they could make it through anything.

THE END

End
file.